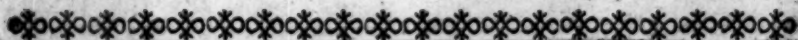


THE
FORCED MARRIAGE,
A TRAGEDY.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR MDCCLIV.



L O N D O N,

Printed for T. CADELL, (Successor to
Mr. MILLAR) in the Strand.

MDCCLXX.

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THE following Play, which was written chiefly with a view to expose a most cruel and absurd piece of tyranny too common in life, might have appeared upon the Stage many years ago: If the Author could have dangled after Managers; or have used the access he had been offered to the prostituted patronage of two or three *great* Men, to whose taste he did not chuse to appeal; or after all, if any but the two female characters could have been properly represented at the time when the piece was finished.

The SCENE,

**A Hall in STRENI's Castle, in the Kingdom of
NAPLES.**

THE
FORCED MARRIAGE,
A TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

STRENI, VICTORIA, *a Servant.*

STRENI.

GO, call her hither; — go! — your mistress, woman,
My hopeful daughter!

VICTORIA.

O not yet, my Lord.

You are too warm — indeed you are.

STRENI.

Well then,

I'll never see her more. Go tell her so. —

Away!

SCENE II.

STRENI, VICTORIA.

VICTORIA.

Compose yourself, my Lord.

STRENI.

My daughter
To fly my house! to make herself and me
The public jest! 'tis monstrous!

VICTORIA.

But, my Lord—

STRENI.

Fly from her own good fortune to a nunnery!
She should have pin'd her life out there, amongst
The peevish sisterhood.—But I'm too gentle;
I've been too kind a parent; that's my fault,
And I deserve this.—
Had I been stern, as many fathers are,
She durst as well have leapt the battlements
As stolen this flight.

VICTORIA.

'Tis true, my Lord, you have been
A tender father; and my cousin knows it.

STRENI.

A TRAGEDY.

7

STRENI.

The day too fixed—and with her own consent—
The match above her proudest hopes—a prize
Scarce to be dreamt of!—Death and distraction!
This luckless wretch's flight will ruin all!
O God! O God!

VICTORIA.

Nay, never fear the Count.
He'll hardly flinch, his love's too obstinate
For that; I'll answer for his constancy,
As little as I know him.

STRENI.

What dost thou say,
VICTORIA? Yes, there's comfort in that thought.—
All may be well yet, think'st thou?—I'm glad, however,
This rash young Hector has not swept her off.
She's here, she's safe; and all my fears from him
Are gone: thank heaven for that!—My dear VICTORIA,
What wouldst thou say? thou hadst something to impart—
Come, speak.

VICTORIA.

My Lord, I know not what to say:
You're grown so choleric that I dare not speak.

8 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

You did not use to be thus. I remember
When, without fear or thinking twice, I durst
Give all my follies their full play before you.
But this unwonted rage quite frightens me ;
It checks my utterance : yet, what need I fear
Left ought too careless should escape my tongue,
When I'm not heard ?

STRENI.

Forgive me, my VICTORIA.
You see how grievously I am provoked.
Anger forgets good manners ; pardon me :
I now am calm, I am myself again.
Speak what thou wilt, as unrestrained as ever.

VICTORIA.

I shall offend.

STRENI.

Fear not. If thou hast ought
That burns within here, boldly give it vent.
I am not yet I hope so peevish grown
As to take fire at any friendly freedom.
I know thou meanst us well.

VICTORIA.

Heaven knows I do.

STRENI.

ADAM A TRAGEDY.

9

STRENI.

Then freely speak thy mind.

VICTORIA.

Well then, my Lord,
Since I have leave to speak, and may be heard;
This marriage—must it be?

STRENI.

It must, VICTORIA.

VICTORIA.

In earnest?

STRENI.

Surely.

VICTORIA.

Then I'm sorry for it.

And, STRENI, tho' to contradict your wisdom
May misbecome my sex, still more my years;
Yet in OLYMPIA's cause I will be plain,
And right or wrong declare my inmost thoughts.
Two sisters bore us; but I love OLYMPIA
More for her sweet and generous qualities
Than all these ties of blood. At your command
I come to see the nuptial rites performed:
But if her mind is so averse, I'd rather
Weep at her funeral, tho' my heart should break.

STRENI.

NI.

10 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

STRENI.

You cannot think I love my daughter less
Than you, VICTORIA; or less know her interest.
What other motive than paternal love
Could make me urge this marriage?

VICTORIA.

Urge a marriage!

That rigid tie which death alone dissolves!
That bold decisive step, which fixes us
In happiness or misery for ever!
That state which is a lottery at the best,
But ventured on with coyness and reluctance
Has little chance to prosper! All things else
To this are trifles, and not worth disputing.
Prevent a giddy marriage when you can;
But never urge the wisest.

STRENI.

How you dictate!

But I have told more years than you, have seen
A little more of life too; and 'tis hard
If old experience has not taught me something.
'Tis strange if passion, prejudice, and youth
Decide more soundly than deliberate reason,
That sees the objects in dispute divested

Of

A TRAGEDY.

11

Of false lights and infatuating fogs.
Pray, of two judges qualified so differently,
Which is the likeliest to determine right?

VICTORIA.

Doubtless, my Lord, the judge who sits serene
Above all mists of passion. But where is he?
Youth has its follies: and when these decline,
A passion springs, they say, that blinds the soul
As much as that gay dotage Love itself.
A certain flower of winter!—Fy upon it!—
They call it —— Avarice.

STRENI.

You're a faucy girl,
And always was so: that pretty head of thine
Has too much pertness in it.

VICTORIA.

Pardon me,

My Lord; but either now, or henceforth never
Can I with any grace or decency
Claim those bold licences your goodness used
T' indulge me in. Suppose you now at play
With a Piedmontese sharper; one that had broke
An hundred banks; a dextrous knave that cheats you
At every throw: and I a looker on.
Should it offend you, if by a wink or hem,

Or

Or pinching of your arm, I gave you hints
 Of this accomplish'd villain? My Lord, my Lord,
 This common cheat, this hankering after more,
 Betrays the wisest to strange weaknesses.
 How else could this e'er happen? STRENI's daughter,
 Rich STRENI's only child, has made (and not
 Without her father's warrant too) a fair
 Exchange of hardly-violable vows, with
 A youth whose qualities and accomplishments
 Equal his noble birth. Heaven! what should hinder
 Such lovers to be happy? — A richer man,
 Better allied, of finer dispositions
 Or parts, I dare not say — but surely older,
 Steps in; and STRENI, never famed for blundering,
 The soundest judge of other men's proceedings,
 Prefers his suit; th' indulgent father grows
 A tyrant, where he least should use his power.
 It is so strange, I shall believe in witchcraft!
 'Tis plain infatuation!

STRENI.

Surely older!

Ay, there's the crime no merit can atone for.
 Better be rash, hot-headed, passion's slave;
 Better be mad, and young; than old with all

Th' ad-

Th' advantages that can consist with years.

Yet CLAUDIO'S not so very old.

VICTORIA.

No, not

Much turned of fifty.

STRENI.

Be it as you will ;

He is for pleasing manners, even for person,

A more engaging man than fifty such

As those whom youth and folly recommend

To ruin half your sex.

VICTORIA.

You think him so, my Lord.

But does OLYMPIA think so? that's material.

Taste is so various, what engages one

Disgusts another : and 'tis vain to dictate

To this despotic principle of nature.

Yet, if it must be so, you should prescribe

Where I shall live, and how ; what I shall wear ;

Even what companions shall engross my time

For days, for weeks, for months ; tho' this might prove

A cruel trespass on my native freedom ;

But let my friend for life, my fortune's lord,

On whom depends my bliss or misery,

Be of my own approving : here at least,

In this one instance may my choice be free.

I have seen the Count, and—

STRENI.

Well, what think you of him?

VICTORIA.

My Lord, I must not touch irreverently

A character that boasts your good opinion :

I dare not tamper with such sacred things.

Besides I'm but a woman, and a young one ;

And to be critical in ought but dress

Or dancing would not suit me. But, if you please,

I'll tell you what some, who pretend to judge

And think they know him, say.

STRENI.

Well, what? Come on.

What do they say, good cousin?

VICTORIA.

First, they praise

His person ; which they say is, for his years,

Specious enough ; tall, jovial, sleek and blooming,

As if 'twere May still. Nor is his mind, they say,

Less youthful ; for he's charmingly facetious ;—

As far as mere corporeal jollity

Is wit and humour ; but it seems no further.

For

For tho' he has laughed incessantly these forty years,
'Tis strange, he has never blundered out one joke!
For his parts they say but little: that may be envy.
And yet they own that, from sagacious selfishness,
And want of heart, he has cunning and deceit
Enough t' outwit ten cardinals; for beneath
An open, frank, unguarded-like behaviour,
A shew of smooth and dimpling innocence,
It seems he hides a quicksand: and they say
He has earned his wealth as boldly as consists
With honest policy, and a just regard
For his own precious head.

STRENI.

A bold free hand
To sketch a character out! The only thing
That's wanting here is likeness.

VICTORIA.

Nay, my Lord,
I only tell you what report says of him;
If that belies him 'tis no fault of mine.
I have heard indeed, that his manner, from facetious,
Is grown of late embarrass'd and half sad:
That he looks pensive, talks to himself, and when
He laughs, it seems an effort to disguise

Some

16 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Some secret grief; which looks mysteriously
To those who mark him. But the cause is plain :
'Tis love, 'tis foolish love, makes him so grave. —
A hopeful youth to grow love-pensive ! — Lord !
I long to see him languish ! It must be charming
To see him languish for a Lady's fortune !

STRENI.

Fortune ! What's that to him, whose ample means,
Raised by his gallant service in the war,
From the sad ruins of an ancient feat,
Vie with the Princes of proud Italy ?
What can a moderate portion add to him
So opulent, and yet without an heir ?
If fortune were his aim he could have choice
Of richer matches ; but he loves OLYMPIA ;
He best deserves her ; and she shall be his,
Or else no child of mine. Besides, this spark,
This *youth* you so much boast of, by report
Ere now has found another bride.

VICTORIA.

Be that
As it may happen. But, alas ! my Lord,
Must all the joys and comforts of her life
Be fondly sacrificed to this ambition,

None

None of her own besides, to give an heir
 To——were it the first house in Italy?
 But if there be such charms in possibly
 Bringing a boy, who possibly may live
 T' inherit a great fortune, wear high titles,
 And yet perhaps be neither great nor happy;
 OLYMPIA, blest with every grace of nature,
 With fortune's bounties, and your daughter too,
 So young, may wait till other matches offer
 More to her mind, perhaps as much to yours.
 Nineteen is surely not a desperate age;
 'Tis even too young to be unplum'd into
 That tame domestic creature called a Wife,
 And quit the careless pleasures of the world.
 Nay, 'tis not decent at these years to grow
 A sober matron.

STRENI.

How thou ramblest on!—

But I am old, my child; I have not long
 To live, not many years; and 'tis my wish,
 My favourite aim, before I die, to see
 My daughter settled in a solid state
 Of happiness. That done, my rest of life

VOL. II.

C

Becomes

18 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Becomes a holiday, that chearful calm
Which age delights in: and I shall——

SCENE III.

STRENI, VICTORIA, *a Servant.*

SERVANT.

My Lord,
There's one just now arrived with some dispatches
He has rode all night to bring you.

STRENI.

I'll see him presently.
Go tell OLYMPIA that this Lady here
Expects her company.

SCENE IV.

STRENI, VICTORIA.

STRENI.

My dear VICTORIA,
I'll leave you to your cousin's entertainment
A little while.

VICTORIA.

I'll go myself and find her.

SCENE

A TRAGEDY.

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SCENE V.

VICTORIA.

Who could believe this good old man, so easy
So gentle otherways, should in this case
Prove so inflexible! But here comes OLYMPIA.—
Alas, how altered!—

SCENE VI.

VICTORIA, OLYMPIA.

VICTORIA.

Ah, my dearest cousin!—
Come, we're alone.

OLYMPIA.

Welcome to my sad heart!—
What need have I of such a cordial fight!

VICTORIA.

Poor dear OLYMPIA!—How catching are thy tears!—
Thy griefs are mine. Would I could bear them for thee!

OLYMPIA.

How I have long'd to see my only friend,
My kind companion!—Now she comes too late;
For I'm undone for ever!

C 2

VICTORIA.

ENE

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

VICTORIA.

It must not be :

All is not lost yet. — Bless me ! thy hands burn mine —
Thou art not well.

OLYMPIA.

Ah ! did you know, VICTORIA,
What I have suffered since we parted last,
You'd wonder that this mortal frame so long
Could bear such misery.

VICTORIA.

Come, dry thy tears.

The worst is past. — Your father will relent :
He needs must yield at last.

OLYMPIA.

Oh ! never, never ! —

To-morrow, for ought that yet appears, compleats
My wretchedness.

VICTORIA.

Good Heaven ! it must not be.

What ! be engaged by force in vows so solemn !
'Tis madness to suppose it.

OLYMPIA.

Either it must be so,
Or I must live an out-cast in the world,

With

A TRAGEDY.

21

With all my father's curses on my head.—
That's my hard sentence.

VICTORIA.

Never till this moment
Have I once dreamt what happiness it was
To own a little fortune uncontroll'd
By any human caprice.—'Tis thine, OLYMPIA!—
Heavens! We shall be the happiest two that live!—
I say 'tis thine!

OLYMPIA.

My generous kind VICTORIA!
But can I bear my father's fix'd displeasure?—
Tho' to my daily grief I have found of late
His tenderness estrang'd, I am not yet
So harden'd with unkindness to endure
To lose his smiles for ever.

VICTORIA.

That fear is vain.
Your father is not of so stern a make.
He cannot tear you from his heart; in him
Nature defies it: this severity
Is but put on, and costs him many a pang,
No doubt, to urge you to what he conceives
Your greatest happiness.—But I long, OLYMPIA,
To hear the whole of thy disastrous tale.

22 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

For this long absence of two years, while all
Intelligence has been shut up between us,
Has kept me still in painful ignorance
Of what has past. The general part indeed
I know too well ; but for particulars
All I have learnt is merely from report ;
Whose specious lies discredit every truth
It chanced to throw out. I left you blest
In the gay spring of love. A view more charming
Of all that's sweet in th' harmony of souls
Was never seen : your father too then seemed
To hold ALPHONSO as his own ; as one
Soon to become his son-in-law,

OLYMPIA,

'Tis true :

And till my father had disclosed his mind,
To give a sanction to ALPHONSO'S vows ;
Whatever tenderness possess'd my soul,
I let it fondly prey upon itself ;
My eyes ne'er told it, and much less my tongue,
I hid my conscious blushes as I could,
My fault'ring speech was virgin bashfulness,
And if I trembled 'twas alarm, not love.
Oh ! I could burst, and on thy friendly bosom
Breathe out my soul, VICTORIA, to remember

The

The dear enchantments of those happy days !
 It was a sweet disease, a charming dream,
 And but a dream, of happiness. At last
 We were contracted by the mutual will
 Of both our parents ; and a distant day
 Fix'd for the nuptials ; when, alas ! —

VICTORIA.

I know

This CLAUDIO saw you ; this rich Count : would he
 And all his millions in a mine had been
 Blown to the Moon, that luckless hour he came
 Blundering to blast such hopeful buds of joy !
 How I could curse him ! — But my dear OLYMPIA,
 I interrupt your story.

OLYMPIA.

Alas ! my father,
 Dazzled with CLAUDIO's wealth, and by his arts
 Of most immoderate shameless flattery won,
 Grew cold to poor ALPHONSO ; by degrees
 Chang'd his familiar cordial entertainment
 To dry civility, and shocking ceremony :
 Seized every opportunity to lessen him
 In my affections, and to recommend
 A stranger to my breast. 'Twas all in vain.

C 4

How

24 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

How could I hear him? Was it possible
 To shift the pure devotion of my heart
 From lov'd ALPHONSO to a golden idol?
 Nay, to th' old object of ALPHONSO's hate? —
 I own I ne'er attempted it. But from
 That adverse time the fortune of our loves
 Has still declined; and (strange fatality!)
 Soon after this another cross event
 Confirm'd the former. —

VICTORIA,

How?

OLYMPIA,

One night at court,
 In the full splendor of a birth-day crowd,
 A vain pert fool, a minion of the King's,
 A coxcomb drunk with favour, snatch'd my hand
 And rudely kiss'd it; such confusion seiz'd me
 I had almost sunk: ALPHONSO, who was by,
 Forgetful of the reverence of the place
 And the King's presence, with one desperate blow
 Laid the plum'd courtier sprawling on the floor:
 And for that hasty generous fault was banished
 From Naples to Palermo, for a twelvemonth.

VICTORIA,

VICTORIA.

Banish'd! Heaven's patience! Had he failed to do it
 He had merited eternal banishment;
 From Naples, Italy, from every land,
 From all society where honour's thought of.
 Had I been King th' ill-manner'd fool who gave
 The first offence, and brought the other on,
 (Which was at worst a noble rashness) should
 Have bore the punishment alone,

OLYMPIA.

The King,

On due submissions offered by ALPHONSO,
 'Tis thought would freely have revoked the sentence,
 But for the secret practices of some
 Who wish'd his absence. Those dark dealings made
 All intercession vain; tho' for my sake
 He stoop'd to more than otherways, I know,
 His generous pride would have consented to.—
 No remedy: he must depart, and leave me
 A widowed bride; tho' first he press'd the nuptials,
 He claimed my hand: that was denied; my father
 Found some prudential reasons to excuse it
 Till his return. ALPHONSO warmly urged
 A private marriage: this my filial duty
 Forbade; tho' else, with all my soul, I would

Have

26 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Have been the partner of his banishment,
 Not to Palermo, but to any desert,
 To Nature's wildest solitudes; I owed it,
 Could ought be dismal where ALPHONSO was,
 To him who owed his banishment to me.
 It was a mournful parting: one sad year
 Appeared an age; and till that age expired
 Our only view of consolation was
 Such intercourse as separates from the dead
 Our absent friends. — But since that cruel day
 Not one short letter —

VICTORIA.

How? That's strange, OLYMPIA!

OLYMPIA.

'Tis no such wonder. For this generous exile,
 The hardly-used ALPHONSO, scarce had left
 The gates of Naples, when my father hurried me
 Down to these ancient melancholy walls,
 Remote from Naples and all neighbourhood.
 The real aim of this retreat, as from
 Th' event appears too plain, was to cut off
 All correspondence with ALPHONSO, and those
 That might promote intelligence between us;
 While this insidious rival should be favoured
 With all advantages to undermine

My

A TRAGEDY.

27

My absent love. For ever since I have known
 This sad retirement, this confinement rather,
 My correspondence has been strictly watched
 Like one in gaol for treason. No company
 This twelvemonth have I seen but CLAUDIO,
 And those who with his odious praises chase
 My persecuted ears. I have been afraid
 Of every morning's light; for every day
 Has seen me flattered, threatened, and cajoled,
 Tortured and teized, to what I most abhor.
 What's worse than these, strange fancies haunt my mind,
 And jealous cares pursue me, that my breast
 Pants with perpetual terrors and alarms.
 My health in sickly languor pines away:
 Kind sleep forsakes me; and when harrafs'd Nature
 Sinks in imperfect rest, distracted dreams,
 Worse than my waking miseries, shake me from
 My frightened slumbers. Gracious Heaven defend me!
 'Tis horrible to think how near the verge
 Of madness I have been.

VICTORIA.

Alas, OLYMPIA!

What blasts have shook thy gentle soul! But Heaven
 And thine own fortitude will still support thee
 To baffle all their rage,

OLYMPIA,

My

OLYMPIA.

My fortitude !

Alas ! my little share of that, VICTORIA,
Has failed me already ; fatally has failed me.
For tired with endless teizing, glad to gain
Some respite from the present pain, at last
I promised in the weakness of my mind,
That if within three days beyond the term
In which ALPHONSO'S banishment expir'd,
He did not claim my plighted faith, I should
Resign my hand to CLAUDIO. This I thought
Was no great venture. For tho' no letters came,
I hoped I knew the cause ; nor would I doubt
ALPHONSO'S faith, and purpose not to lose
One day of liberty in absence from me ;
These I remember were his words at parting.
But, ah VICTORIA ! would that doleful year
Was yet not ended, that I still might hope !

VICTORIA.

Is it then past ?

OLYMPIA.

Two days since : and to-morrow
Decides my destiny.

VICTORIA.

But is there ought

In

In this, that at his father's instigation
ALPHONSO has commenced a nuptial treaty
With a Sicilian Lady?

OLYMPIA.

Such a rumour
Has, since that promise was extorted from me,
Been so industriously rung in my ears,
And managed with such arts and aggravations,
It seemed, when the first shock was past, a fiction
Contriv'd to shake my faith, and drive me in
A hurry of resentment to my ruin.
But by your looks you seem to apprehend
'Tis something more—Perhaps you've heard he's married,
For Heaven's sake do not flatter me, VICTORIA.
If it is so tell me. — Ah!

VICTORIA.

Nay, dear OLYMPIA,
I tell you all I have heard; and that perhaps
Comes from the secret fountain-head of lies.
At least if such a treaty was confirmed
You might expect the earliest notice of it.
My life for't your intelligence in that
Would pass without much barr or scrutiny.

OLYMPIA.

That's all my little comfort. But alas!

I know

30 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

I know not what to think of this delay.
 Sometimes my melancholy whispers me
 He has forgot or hates me, and in revenge of
 My father's flights has left me. At other times
 That probity, that unaffected warmth
 Of love unchanged by shocking injuries ;
 Those generous manners, th' inviolable honour
 Which even his enemies admit, assure me
 He cannot be so base to quit me thus,
 Without some form at least of taking leave.
 Perhaps he has heard I'm married, and believes it ;
 Perhaps he is not well. — I'm all perplexity.
 This agony of suspense is perfect torture,
 From which, to know that fate had done its worst
 Would be a kind of desperate repose. —
 Should he prove faithless, I have done, VICTORIA,
 What you'll despise me for.

VICTORIA.

It cannot be.

You ne'er can stoop to ought that's really mean :
 But what, dear cousin ?

OLYMPIA.

As the time approach'd
 Which was to prove decisive of my fortune,
 My fears encreased ; my anxious throbbings grew

Quite

A TRAGEDY.

31

Quite insupportable; my fluttering breast
 Could find no quiet. My restless brain at work
 How to prevent the worst, at last I found
 A trusty messenger to bear with speed
 A letter to ALPHONSO; which explained
 Whate'er was needful of my sufferings past
 And fears of worse to come; and that if still
 He loved and meant to claim me, the least delay
 Might render that impossible. Ere this
 I might have had some answer; but no news
 Arriving, in despair last night I sought
 Protection in a monastery that stands
 Amongst the neighbouring mountains: there I past
 The anxious night; but thither traced, this morning
 I was demanded by th' authority of
 My father in his vassals.

VICTORIA.

But the sisters,
 The Abbess, Heaven! how could they yield you up
 So tamely? — their protection!

OLYMPIA.

Do not blame them;
 They did their utmost for me. I was received
 With manners most respectfully obliging,
 With tears of sympathy, and fluttering care

32 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

To hide me panting from the hot pursuit.
 But as my sheltering place was soon discovered,
 'Twas more it seems than they could answer for,
 To brave my father's summons. — You see, VICTORIA,
 How every refuge fails me. A short time now
 Remains for me to hope. Yet something still,
 Whether the whisperings of some friendly power,
 Or the last effort of tenacious hope,
 Suggests to my fore mind that ere to-morrow
 ALPHONSO will be here. But come what will
 I shall not marry CLAUDIO ; that's determined. —
 I know one refuge from all misery —
 One cordial draught shall ———

VICTORIA.

What ? — Thy words are frightful ! —
 Heaven banish all such thoughts ! — Alas ! OLYMPIA,
 Thou look'st thro' the false glass of Melancholy.
 Trust me there's nothing yet so desperate here.
 Whate'er may happen lucklessly, the worst
 Is still avoidable. — You shall be sick —
 Or take another flight. — We'll fly together.
 I will secure you in a little fortress
 Which to the General himself in person
 Shall scarce surrender you at the first summons.
 There are a thousand shifts ; more than we yet

Can

Can think of. — But the time is precious :
Come let us hide ourselves, and plot together:
'Twill be a charming triumph, if we two,
In half a day, at one unlooked-for blow,
Can dreadful schemes demolish, which to rear
Has cost much older heads a restless year.



ACT II. SCENE I.

STRENI.

What's to be done? Good God! these news confound me!
I cannot yet believe my eyes. Let me read
This letter again. — There's nothing in the world
But villainy and delusion: knaves and dupes
Maintain this foolish farce of human life. —
Let me see —

“ I am this moment informed that Count CLAUDIO is
“ accused of some embezzlements and other perfidious
“ practices during the late war, which render him ob-
“ noxious to the State; and that warrants are actually
“ issued out to apprehend him. I am sorry this piece
“ of news did not reach me till after my sister VICTO-
“ RIA's departure; but hope it will not come too late
“ to prevent your engaging in so fatal an alliance. At
“ least, whether my information prove true or false, I
“ thought myself obliged to give you this notice.” —
Well, this cuts deep indeed! There all my hopes
My flattering schemes lie blasted and o'erthrown.
The shock so stuns me that I yet scarce feel it.
Is it so then, CLAUDIO? Well, I find at last

This

'This world is all a cheat, and there's no trusting
 To fair appearances.—Would this had happened
 A twelvemonth sooner ! what an anxious year
 It would have saved me and my poor OLYMPIA !
 Yet better now than a twelvemonth hence ; — nay, than
 To-morrow. — Bless me ! how nearly have we 'scaped
 The crush of this man's ruin ! — It grieves my soul
 When I look back on what my child has suffered,
 And all for nothing. But, Heaven knows ! whate'er
 Was harshly managed was still kindly meant.
 I long to lighten of a deadly weight
 Her labouring breast, that flutters now with fear
 T' approach me, and retards her trembling steps.
 Could she but guess the purpose of my message
 She 'd make more haste to meet me.—But she comes.

SCENE II.

STRENI, OLYMPIA.

OLYMPIA.

I am ashamed to see my father's face :
 But prostrate thus and breathless at his feet
 I beg forgiveness.

D 2

STRENI

36 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

STRENI.

Rise, OLYMPIA. Come,
Indeed it was not well.

OLYMPIA.

'Twas my despair
That did it.—Pardon me, my Lord—my father!

STRENI.

I do, my child, I do. You've never found me
An unrelenting parent: or if ever
I have given way to some austerities,
My very tenderness provoked me to them,
My eager care to see you happy.

OLYMPIA.

My father,
You have been ever gracious, kind and tender;
Your goodness still prevented all my wishes:
And it has cost me many a painful throb
To be reduced, by thwarting obligations,
To act a stubborn part against your pleasure.
I know your purpose is to make me happy:
But what's all splendor and superfluous wealth,
What's all the world, to dear content of mind?—
My heart is not at my command: and yet
So far I could controul it, that was there one

Dear

Dear as my soul—I never would, without
 My father's sanction, change my vows with his:
 There is but one thing you can urge and I
 Not cheerfully yield to. Were your sacred life
 To be redeemed with mine, oh! I should fall
 A willing victim: nothing there could combat
 My filial duty. But to give the hand
 To one while to another the heart's engaged,
 Is something so prophane, it looks so like
 Base prostitution, that the more I think on't
 The more it shocks me.—Still my honoured father,
 Let me implore your grace—'Tis not too late
 To save me from this violation.

STRENI.

My child,

I will no longer to thy delicacy
 Oppose the steadiest purpose of my soul.
 Indeed I'm sorry to have urged so far
 A match that shocks thee. To-morrow is the day
 Thou dreadst so much: but I would rather make
 The greatest power on earth my deadly foe
 Than thee unhappy.

OLYMPIA.

O my gracious father!

D 3

Tears

38 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Tears so o'erpower me that they choak my words—
But on my knees I thank you.—You're too good!

STRENI.

Come to my heart, my child : thou never wast
A stranger there, nor ever can'st thou be
While it has vital warmth.

OLYMPIA.

My dearest father,
This kindness makes at once a full amends
For all the griefs that I have ever known.—
I am too happy——

A SERVANT.

The Count, my Lord,
Is at the gates.

STRENI.

The Count!—what CLAUDIO?—well—
Conduct him in.—He comes betimes;—before
He was expected.—But—what ails my child—
Thou tremblest and growst pale!—Retire my child—
My poor OLYMPIA!—Well, 'tis plain enough
What all this hurry means. But soft and fair
Good Count! you come no further this way, Count,
Not one step further. You little know——

SCENE

SCENE III.

STRENI, CLAUDIO.

CLAUDIO.

Good morrow,
And many happy days, to good Lord STRENI.

STRENI.

The same to you, Count CLAUDIO.—Who'd believe it!

CLAUDIO.

You cannot wonder that I thus prevent
My happiest day : my love of dear OLYMPIA,
My warm ambition to be stiled your son,
Might well account for that. — But I have news, —
No bad ones neither.—Guess, my Lord.

STRENI.

How should I?—

What mean you ?

CLAUDIO.

Only this ; — at last 'tis done
What we so long have laboured — ALPHONSO's married !
'Tis true—'tis past all doubt—I have sure proofs on't.
And now OLYMPIA stands absolved from all

D 4

Engage-

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Engagements there, which gives me double joy :
 For it would damp all happiness to shock
 Her scrupulous honour ; and indeed that thought
 Has always check'd me—What! you're sad, my Lord,

STRENI.

I have some reason. I am quite heart-sick
 Of ineffectual cares. I've done whate'er
 Authority or gentle arts could do
 To push this backward treaty, but find at last
 'Tis all in vain. 'Twill never do, believe me.

CLAUDIO.

How's this, my worthy Lord? you quite amaze me!
 I thought it had been fix'd.

STRENI.

It seem'd so ; but
 I cannot force my daughter's inclinations,

CLAUDIO.

I hope they are not now less kind to me
 Than when the happy day was named,

STRENI.

Indeed,
 Not to amuse you with false complaisance,
 I think they rather are ; for as the day
 Draws nearer her reluctance grows more violent,

A TRAGEDY.

41

I cannot bear to see her agonies,
Could I compel her, as indeed I cannot,
I feel too much compunction in my breast
To use a power so tyrannous and unjust
Against my child. Nor would it suit your wisdom
To yoke your years with an unwilling bride.
And as your friend, my Lord, I would dissuade you
From further thoughts of this ; extorted vows
Can never tend to happiness.

CLAUDIO.

I hope
I do but dream ! If not, your mind, my Lord,
Is strangely altered for the time. These difficulties
Till now have ne'er been thought of. But they're nothing:
For be affection e'er so coy, 'twill grow
At last with tender cherishing.

STRENI.

But its growth
Will not be forced. Let time and nature work.
Have patience. Let it rest. A short delay
Can breed no danger here. A month or two hence
Will do as well, or better.

CLAUDIO.

A month or two !

Heavens !

42 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Heavens ! that's an age to one who loves like me !—

No, no,—to-morrow—would it were to-day !

STRENI.

It cannot be to-day—nor yet to-morrow.

CLAUDIO.

How ! not to-morrow ? Ah ! by all that's tender

Let me insist on that, my dearest Lord.

STRENI.

Urge me no further.

CLAUDIO.

For your own sake, my Lord,

As well as mine, I must.—How will it found ?

'Tis known——

STRENI.

Suppose ALPHONSO had returned ?

You know the terms——

CLAUDIO.

He's married.

STRENI.

I'm sorry for it.

CLAUDIO.

You joke.

STRENI,

A TRAGEDY.

43

STRENI.

Not I.

I'm not so merry.

CLAUDIO.

Sorry!

STRENI.

Yes, I say sorry.

CLAUDIO.

Why?

STRENI.

My daughter loved him.—

And he's an honest man.

CLAUDIO.

There are many such

I hope, my Lord.

STRENI.

Yes, hundreds who appear such

To one that is,

CLAUDIO.

Good Heaven! What can this mean?——

But some men's favour is a slippery hold.

Not long ago ALPHONSO was dismiss'd

To make me room; now 'tis my turn to yield

To some new favourite. I see it plainly.

STRENI.

STRENI.

I shall not henceforth be too rash in making
New friendships ; — that I promise you.

CLAUDIO.

My Lord,

You aim at something ; what I know not : but
To one who almost lived upon your smiles,
That angry coyness in your look is death ;
And every word you utter is so keen
It stings me to the heart. I could encounter
The rudest malice of indifferent men
With vengeance or contempt. But from the man
I love, and on whose love I built my happiness,
Unkindness tortures while it wounds. — How have I
Deserved this ? sure some secret foe of mine
Has been too busy with your ear : for foes
I have, more than I know of. What little services
I've done my country are by some repaid
With Envy : but I laugh at that, my Lord.
To one that's fortified in innocence
Such bolts are harmless : 'Tis as 'twere to batter
A fort with snow-balls. Yet it would be kind,
Nay 'tis but justice, if malicious tongues
Have tampered with my name, to let me know
Of what I stand accused.

STRENI.

STRENI.

You talk like one
Unconscious of all blame : but boldness is not
Always the surest test of innocence.

CLAUDIO.

What have I done ?

STRENI.

Look backwards, and consider.
Peruse your life a little.

CLAUDIO.

There's nothing there
I dare not boldly look into. But what,
My Lord, does all this tend to ?

STRENI.

Have you nothing
To settle with the state ?—

CLAUDIO.

To settle !—yes—
The state is in my debt.

STRENI.

But has the state
No claim on you ?

CLAUDIO.

CLAUDIO.

For nothing but my services
Whene'er it needs them.

STRENI.

Are you sure of that ?

CLAUDIO.

As sure as that I live.

STRENI.

All-conscious Heaven !

Was ever such effrontery known !—D'ye think
We've no intelligence here ? Or can you be
So ignorant of the dreadful storm that hangs
Ready to burst upon your head ? is 't possible
You should not know how dear a reckoning, what
A bloody one perhaps, you have to pay ?
For what, you best should guess. —Infatuate man !
Away !—There is no safety here !—Fly quickly !—
There is no ground where Naples has command
Can shelter you !—You're mad to stay one moment !—
The blood-hounds of the state are at your heels !—
Away, and hide yourself betimes !

CLAUDIO.

Ha ! ha !

STRENI.

STRENI.

You laugh! — (He's surely mad!)

CLAUDIO.

Indeed I do,

To see the bottom of this fearful mystery.

'Tis well no wounded conscience watches here

To cry out Guilty when another's crimes

Burst out. There's here a small mistake, my Lord;

Only one CLAUDIO for another; that's all.—

Ha! ha!

STRENI.

What other CLAUDIO?

CLAUDIO.

You have seen him.

A distant kinsman of my own, and tho'

He has hurt me in the tenderest point I pity him.

'Twas I that raised him to a place of trust,

Because I thought him honest; and, for some time,

So blind is friendship, I neglected all

Reports to his discredit, as the blasts

Of envy; till at last some flagrant acts

Appeared. — I never was so angry; never

Perhaps but then have I rebuked with rancour.

Yet on his promise to offend no more

He

48 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

He was continued. But it seems th' effect
Of all my friendly warnings, all my threats,
And weak mistaken lenity at last,
Was only this, to put him on his guard,
And make him a more politick knave. But now
He is in hands will strip him of his spoils,
And squeeze the inmost marrow from his bones.
For, if 'tis true what I have heard, by this
He's prisoner to the state.

STRENI.

(What shall I think ?)—

'This is a strange mistake ; and if indeed
It be no more, I'm glad on't for the sake
Of one I am so loath to judge of harshly.
But on your honour, pardon me good Count,
Is there no more than this ?

CLAUDIO.

D'ye doubt my word ?—

What should I gain by such a falsehood ?—I
Who see no luxury in simple lying ?
'Were I th' obnoxious wretch you take me for
My mind had hardly been employed to-day
In nuptial thoughts ; nor should my presence here
Have shock'd good STRENI. Look upon my face ;

Is

Is there ought there or in my whole behaviour
 That shews like guilt ? Heavens ! can I be so monstrous
 So madly wicked, so absurd a villain,
 For such I must be, to involve my friends,
 Those whom I love most, one whom I adore,
 In my perdition ?—But if you doubt me still,
 With all my heart here let us stop, my Lord,
 Till every straw suspicion stumbles at
 Be swept away. Inform yourself ; be cautious ;
 Do nothing rashly. And, my Lord, to shew you
 How dearly I regard your satisfaction :
 Let us, that you may weigh it at full leisure,
 Adjourn this marriage ; not for a month or two,
 But for a year or two, or three, or seven,—
 Or, if you please, for ever. Heaven forbid
 I should engage you in my bankruptcy !—
 Good God defend me !— So, farewell, my Lord—
 My servants there—

STRENI.

Come ; not so hot, my Count.
 A word or two before you go. Let's part
 Like friends at least.

CLAUDIO.

Where friendship is so ticklish
 The sooner done the better. I'm heart-sick

56 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Of hot and cold friends : They never quit the pains
It costs to manage them. Farewel !

STRENI.

Yet hear me.—

I'm sorry, CLAUDIO ; I am quite confounded
For this mistake. But the report was aimed
At you so very plainly, that your brother
Must have believed it. 'Tis not in my nature,
Old as I am, to be suspicious.
But where the welfare of my only child,
Her happiness for life depends, to scruple
Is no offence I hope ; at least I'm sure
meant you none. In proof of which, demand
My utmost power to serve you.

CLAUDIO.

Ah STRENI ! STRENI !

You know me but too well. I am a child
To you ; mere wax, you mould me at your pleasure :
You wound and heal me. Were I less your slave,
And less enamoured, this unkind behaviour
Had rid me of those chains which I prefer
To freedom—love and friendship.

STRENI.

Come, forgive

An old man's spleen ; forget it. And to prove

How

How little apt I am to keep impressions
 To CLAUDIO's disadvantage ; every art
 I have, and all my power, shall be employed
 To hasten on these nuptials. — But is it certain,
 This marriage of ALPHONSO ? make that appear,
 And the main obstacle's removed.

CLAUDIO.

Last night

I met a gentleman, you know him ; STURIO ;
 You have seen him with ALPHONSO : he comes on business
 Post-haste from Sicily. The night before
 He left Palermo was, he says, the eve of
 ALPHONSO's wedding, which his haste alone
 Excused him from attending. 'Tis like he brings
 Some message hither ; for he said, this morning
 He should be here. I thought to have found him here
 Before me ; but he'll soon appear, I doubt not,
 And certify his news.

STRENI.

Well, let him come.

He comes with no intelligence to retard
 Our purpose. — Shall I leave you, CLAUDIO, here
 Till I prepare OLYMPIA for such news
 As rashly told might hurt her ?

E 2

CLAUDIO.

How

CLAUDIO.

By all means.

STRENI.

You'll follow presently ?

CLAUDIO.

I will, my Lord.

SCENE IV.

CLAUDIO.

What am I doing ? 'Tis almost a crime
 To work on this good man's credulity thus.
 But the great principle which rules us all,
 The care that quits us not even in despair,
 Is love of self. — Self-preservation never
 Can be unjust. If this succeed, his credit
 And interest with the state may clear me. Nothing,
 Nothing but that can do it. But we must
 Dispatch : this crazy fabric of my fortune
 Totters at every step of stealing time. —
 But then to be reproached and baited for
 Dissimulation ! — Who can prove that ? — None.
 Was I obliged to know what secret trains
 Were laid to blow my envied grandeur up ? —

Not I. There's something too in STRENI's carriage
To justify a little double dealing.

He has not used me quite ingenuously;
And far from kindly. Interest is his God,
As well as that of other—honest men.
So far all's fair, we're on an equal footing. —
Well——

This is the most convenient cousin!—CLAUDIO,
I thank you for this seasonable help.
Would I could serve you in my turn! But that's
Too late; your doom is certain: mine comes next
To be determined; to my loss or not
I dare not guess.—But flourish I or fall,
'Tis still some satisfaction to have crush'd
The eager hopes of this impetuous youth.
Dupe of fair words, and smiles, and shrugs, ALPHONSO,
You have forgot, I do believe, but I
Shall still remember, with what haughtiness
You faced me when a younger Officer
O'erstrode you once. Was I to blame? He knew
The art of speaking to the palm; and was
A docile boy, as stupid as you please,
And not too apt to rouse much jealousy.
These are the men best fitted for promotion
In every rank of life.—But now to OLYMPIA.

54 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Now help me Flattery!—Flattery! She deserves
All praise; such excellence could not find its match in
The men of this age: yet she must be mine;
And soon, or never. Hence then all delay;
My fate depends on this important day.

ACT III. SCENE I.

OLYMPIA, VICTORIA.

VICTORIA.

Come, cousin, you may breathe here freely; come,
There floats no fulsome incense here. You need
Fresh air; a tempest were almost too little
To fan this musky cloud of flattery off.
Foh! Such a stench of perfume suffocates worse
Than a volcano's mouth. Heaven! what a tongue!
I do believe the Devil inspires him. Bless me!
With what a face of plain sincerity,
With what a serious confidence, he throws out
The most extravagant flatteries! How they work
On your hard heart I know not: but for me,
I feel so tickled with my share, God knows,
I shall not sleep these three nights.

OLYMPIA.

Ah VICTORIA!

Was ever one so wretched?

VICTORIA.

To be teized thus
Indeed is most vexatious. But an hour,

56 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

'Tis hardly more, since from the middle gloom of
A long tempestuous night, a sudden blaze
Like noon burst out, almost with shocking brightness,
It smiled a while, enchantingly it smiled,
And promised balmy climes and happy shores :
Then, like a dream of th' air, this gaudy meteor,
This phantom of a sun, dissolved itself
Into the waste of darkness.

OLYMPIA,

Ah me ! VICTORIA !

What shall I do ?

VICTORIA,

Be firm, and never yield.
You're in the right, and cannot be too obstinate,
Be constant still ; a little struggling more
Will end this strife.

OLYMPIA,

Alas ! alas ! all's over,

VICTORIA.

All's over ! How my dear ? I say keep firm,
Why this despondence ? recollect yourself.
Have you, good Heaven ! forgot your father's promise,
So lately made ? his unexpected promise,
So voluntarily made ? Insist on that.

Never

Never forsake yourself, my dear OLYMPIA.

Abide inflexibly by that.

OLYMPIA.

Alas !

You come not near my grief.

VICTORIA.

I guess it. But

There's something yet more shocking than the loss of

A faithless lover. What you may avoid ;

And will I hope.

OLYMPIA.

Sure you have never loved.

VICTORIA.

My dear OLYMPIA, would you have me whine ?

And with an ill-timed sympathy indulge

A mind already too much softened, when

Th' occasion calls for fortitude and spirit ?

One effort more — fear nothing — the steady mind

O'er-matches fate itself.—

OLYMPIA.

My fate approaches.

Ah my VICTORIA !—You heard the news ?

VICTORIA,

I did,

OLYMPIA,

58 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

OLYMPIA.

Do you believe it? May it not be false still?
Tell me sincerely what you think.

VICTORIA.

'Tis hard
To judge; a little time will shew it.

OLYMPIA.

But

May it not possibly enough be false?
It comes from a suspicious hand. A falsehood
Believ'd for e'er so short a time may speed
A wicked purpose; and this art they say
The cunning often practise.— Besides, this messenger
Appears not yet; 'tis noon too,—Ah VICTORIA!
Is there not room to hope still?

VICTORIA.

Dear OLYMPIA!

I would suppose the worst in doubtful cases,
For better mortify a little needlessly,
Than meet misfortune unprepared.

OLYMPIA.

Alas!

I am my own impostor. Strange, that misery

Should

A TRAGEDY.

59

Should flatter thus itself! Why dare I not
Resolve at once to look upon my fate?

A SERVANT.

Madam, a Gentleman, one Signor STURIO,
Begs at your leisure to attend you.

OLYMPIA.

STURIO!—

Well shew him in—STURIO you said? Good Heaven!
What shall I do, VICTORIA!—Stay—I'm busy.
Excuse me to him.—Tell him—by and by
I shall be glad to see him. When I ring
You may conduct him hither.

Ah VICTORIA!

[Sitting down hastily.]

What shall I do?

I cannot see this man:

[Rising.]

This beating at the heart makes it impossible—
I pant for breath—I shall not have the power
To speak one word.—Ah me!

VICTORIA.

Dearest OLYMPIA!

Yield not to this alarm. Recover yourself.
This flutter cannot last.

OLYMPIA,

Must I be seen

In this confusion? It must not be—I will not.

60 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

It is not fit I should.—Pray might not you
Receive this visit for me? Do, dear cousin.
Say I am sick, or whimsical, or mad;
Say any thing, and let me hide myself.

VICTORIA.

Stay, dear OLYMPIA. Come: it cannot be.
You cannot now with honour to yourself
Avoid this interview. Come, come, be firm.
'Twill soon be over. Were the case my own,
I think I should with most contemptuous coolness
Receive the last leave of a faithless man.
What should you fear who know the worst already?
Let indignation shake this tim'rous fit off;
And shew yourself superior to the loss
Of one not worth the keeping. Come, you can;
I know, I'm sure, you can.

OLYMPIA.

I am ashamed
Of this base weakness.—Well, what must be must be.
[Rings.]
Now, Heaven support me!

VICTORIA.

Never fear. The fit
Goes off: and what alarms you now, my dearest,
You will hereafter laugh at.—Shall I leave you?

OLYMPIA.

A TRAGEDY.

61

OLYMPIA.

No, stay. ——— He comes. ——— Ah !

VICTORIA.

Let him. He's more afraid

Than you.

SCENE II.

OLYMPIA, VICTORIA, STURIO.

STURIO.

All happiness to Lady OLYMPIA.

OLYMPIA.

You're welcome, Sir, from Sicily. — Pray sit, Sir.
I'm glad to see you ; you're a mighty stranger.
We have not seen you I'm sure almost these two years.
How like you Sicily, Sir ? They say it is
A most enchanting spot.

STURIO.

A Paradise, Madam.

OLYMPIA.

They say so. Pray what news there, Sir ? I hope
You left all friends well, and—amongst the rest
How does your friend ALPHONSO ?

STURIO.

62 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

STURIO.

Madam, I left him well.

OLYMPIA.

We're told he has altered his condition lately. —
He's married? — Is he not? — This Lady, Sir,
My friend, may know whate'er belongs to me.
He's married? —

STURIO.

Madam ———

OLYMPIA.

Well, I wish him joy
With all my heart. I hope 'tis happily.
The Lady — you have seen her?

STURIO.

Often, Madam,
CASERTA's daughter: not a first-rate beauty,
Nor yet quite homely.

OLYMPIA.

Well, I wish them happy
With all my soul. — No other news, Sir?

STURIO.

None, But
This letter, Madam, parting from ALPHONSO,
I pro-

A TRAGEDY.

63

I promised to deliver. ——— Pardon me
Th' abruptness of this hurry ; business calls me :
And what more time I have to spare at present
Lord STRENI claims. Madam, may all that's good
Ever attend you.

OLYMPIA.

I thank you, Sir. Farewell. —

SCENE III.

OLYMPIA, VICTORIA.

OLYMPIA.

Ah! ah! VICTORIA! [*Throwing herself into a chair.*]

VICTORIA.

Dear OLYMPIA, patience! ———
What shall I do? — When I should comfort her
I weep myself. — My dear OLYMPIA! —

OLYMPIA.

Ah me!

VICTORIA.

This desperate grief will kill her.

OLYMPIA.

Oh! Oh! Oh!

VICTORIA.



64 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

VICTORIA.

My dear OLYMPIA, let us not indulge
This weakness of our spirit.—Come, my dearest,
Come rouse yourself.

OLYMPIA.

Alas! alas! VICTORIA!—

Do not despise me.

VICTORIA.

Nay, my dear, this weakness
Has nothing shameful in it. As it shews
A delicate mind, it is a beauty rather;
And only grows a fault and a misfortune
By too much yielding to it.

OLYMPIA.

Ah VICTORIA!—

I am so humbled with repeated shocks'
That my tame spirit sinks beneath its wrongs.—
But for this letter—I am blind with weeping—
Read it, VICTORIA.

VICTORIA.

Burn it.

OLYMPIA.

Read it first.

VICTORIA.

VICTORIA.

“ Madam, in spite of all your neglects I have prevailed
“ upon myself to write to you once more, that you
“ may know I have temper enough to forgive them.
“ I am not so selfish as to disapprove of your choice ;
“ it is perfectly prudent ; for wealth you know
“ is the great support of female pride : vanity I should
“ say, for pride is too noble a name for it. I wish you
“ joy of your Count ; there is one noble quality at-
“ tends him—he is rich. But if he ever dares appear
“ where I am, were he twenty times your husband, I
“ shall take the liberty to put him in mind of some
“ other qualities I have discovered in him. In the mean
“ time I am so far from reproaching you with incon-
“ stancy, that I thank you for having shewn it before
“ it could essentially hurt me. I am following your
“ example, and shall forget all former attachments as
“ fast as I can. It is what I owe in justice to myself,
“ and to one of your sex who deserves all my love and
“ esteem. Farewell, OLYMPIA ! You are not what I
“ thought you once. But may Heaven rain gold upon
“ you ! So prays the forgiving, tho’ monstrously
“ abused

ALPHONSO.”

OLYMPIA.

What does he say ?

[*Snatching the letter.*]

66 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

VICTORIA.

Cousin, I give you joy
Of this deliverance from one worthless man.

OLYMPIA.

What does he say? — *All my neglects* — that's well,
He has *prevailed upon himself* — 'Tis much
So great a spirit should condescend so far
As to abuse me! — *I have temper enough* —
Yes temper! surely — *To forgive you*, that's pleasant —
'Tis pity you should have reason to forgive me.
Your choice is perfectly prudent — Fool! what choice?
The only choice I ever made was a wrong one,
And I'm ashamed of 't — thank Heaven I've missed it! —
Choice! —

What's this he talks

Of wealth — of female pride, and vanity? —
Such rambling stuff! — he's mad! the man's distracted!
You *wish me joy*. Heaven mend your crazy head!
Did you ever hear the like?

VICTORIA.

'Tis an original.

OLYMPIA.

But if he ever dares appear, &c.

How well he counterfeits anger, and plays the bully! —

A TRAGEDY.

67

But here's a stroke worth all the rest—I am so far

From reproaching you with inconstancy, &c.

—Before it could essentially hurt me—

What does he mean? There is no bearing this!

Base foul-mouthed perjured traitor, have you the face

Thus to abuse me, whose only fault to you

Was too much constancy? I'm well repaid

For all the griefs my foolish constancy

Has cost me!—Am I not, VICTORIA?

VICTORIA.

Curse him!

He is not worth your anger.

OLYMPIA.

I am following your example—

Good again!—*and shall forget—forget*

Me! by all means do. *In justice to one*

Of your sex who deserves all my love and

Esteem—

That she may do without deserving much.—

You are not what I thought you once—

No more are you—May Heaven

Rain all its plagues upon me, if you dwell

A moment longer here—Thus, thus I tear

The villain from my heart. 'Tis done at once.—

There, there—thou art no more. [*Tearing the letter.*]

F 2

VICTORIA.

68 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,
VICTORIA.

Who talks of want
Of spirit? How this haughtiness becomes thee!
This indignation's charming.

OLYMPIA.

Well, I'm cured
Of one great folly. How light my heart feels from
A villainous guest that sat like lead upon it!
My spirit mounts again. Believe me, cousin,
I'm glad of this man's baseness; I enjoy it:
There's luxury in it. I do not entertain
A wish so tame as that he had proved unalterable.
'Tis better as it is. It feeds my spite
Voluptuously to find him such a villain.
I wish he knew how heartily I scorn him!
How thoroughly I detest him! — He shall know it.
I'll make him feel it.—

VICTORIA.

Your absolute neglect,
As if such things had never past, will gall him.
'Twill be the finest vengeance! Cool neglect,
If there is pride in him, will humble him more
Than fifty thousand spiteful offices.

OLYMP

A TRAGEDY.

69

OLYMPIA.

Oh ! that mean letter ! I could tear myself.
I wish the palsy had seized this hand before
It did me such disgrace.

VICTORIA.

My dear OLYMPIA,
Ne'er let that hurt you. You did but what was honourable.
Were it to do again you should. — It leaves
His baseness no excuse.

OLYMPIA.

Pray, when this message came,
How did I look, VICTORIA ? tell me plainly.
Did I seem violently shocked ?

VICTORIA.

By no means.

OLYMPIA.

Look'd I not flush'd and pale by turns ? No signs
Of wildness or disorder ?

VICTORIA.

None that he could perceive.

OLYMPIA.

Did I not falter in my speech a little ?

F 3

VICTORIA.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

VICTORIA.

Not more than I do now.

OLYMPIA.

Nor tremble?

VICTORIA.

No.

Thou didst behave with so composed a grace,
I could have hugg'd thee.

OLYMPIA.

Well, I'm glad of this.

And now, VICTORIA, I shall shew this false one
How slightly I regard him. I have the means
To shew him instantly 'twas honour, more
Than ill-directed love, that made me stand
So long and close a siege; made me hold out
To disobedience, almost to rebellion,
Against my father's threats, his warm intreaties,
Against his wiser choice. My honour now
Absolved, I cannot be too passive to
My filial duty.

VICTORIA.

What dost thou mean, OLYMPIA?

OLYMPIA.

To mortify a villain's insolence.

VICTORIA,

A TRAGEDY.

71

VICTORIA.

But how?

OLYMPIA.

By giving my rejected vows to
The man he hates ; whom for his sake I scorned ;
Whom now I love because I know he hates him,
Yes, I will give his mortal foe my hand.—
By heaven, I will !

OLYMPIA.

You will ! indeed not you.

OLYMPIA.

Then, if I do not, may the——

SCENE IV.

OLYMPIA, VICTORIA, STRENI.

STRENI.

Well, OLYMPIA.

You cannot doubt it now ? The truth appears
At last. You see, what happens every day,
The fickleness of youthful vows : despise it ;
The dignity of your sex demands it of you.
Laugh at it.

F 4

OLYMPIA.

74 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,
OLYMPIA.

Nay, my Lord, I have forgot it.
There is but one reflection stings me now.
I have, against my nature, stubbornly
Opposed my father's will, his just command.
Most heartily I repent it ; and I hope
Your goodness will forgive a crime which honour
Betrayed me to. My honour disengaged,
I have no will but yours.

STRENI.

There spoke my daughter !
My will, my pleasure is to see you happy.
'Tis that engrosses all my cares ; for that
Have I so steadily withstood your tears,
And made the weakness of affection yield
To rigid reason. Now th' auspicious hour
Appears ; and not to dally needlessly
With time, what must be done to-morrow may
As well be done to-day. Nay were it only
For triumph's sake, to make as light of love
As the most fickle boy, the sooner the better,
This very day —

OLYMPIA.

This moment !

VICTORIA.

A TRAGEDY.

73

VICTORIA.

Hold, OLYMPIA!

STRENI.

Hold you, VICTORIA!

VICTORIA.

No: I will not hold.

Shall I, my Lord, when hurried by despair
My friend would plunge into the boiling deep,
Look calmly on, and cry Well done; 'tis right;
This world is not for you; destroy yourself;
And do it bravely, as becomes your spirit?—
But this is worse. Death ends all human woes:
But this is launching a weak slender bark
Into a sea of sorrows.

STRENI.

Pray, good madam,
None of your rhetoric.

VICTORIA.

I affect not rhetoric.

'Tis truth.

STRENI.

'Tis false.

VICTORIA.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

VICTORIA.

My Lord, I should be grieved
 To see the trial hazarded.—OLYMPIA!—
 You're going in a sudden fit of spleen
 To throw yourself away. ALPHONSO has done it.
 But disagreeable ties fit not so heavy
 On his as on our sex. Yet he's unhappy :
 Self-ruined, blindly hurried to his fate.
 For he has married from mere pique, I'm positive ;
 And loves you still. That angry letter shews it,

OLYMPIA.

Love me ! Ne'er name him more : it shocks me,

VICTORIA.

Cousin,

Is't possible a little passing gust
 Of spleen should drive you to devote your life
 To eternal discontent ? To wed the man
 You cannot love—whom you despise ?—Good Heaven !
 The moment that you cool you'll give the world
 To have the deed undone,

STRENI.

This is intolerable !

VICTORIA, you're too busy, much too busy.

Meddle

Meddle not here, I charge you, Mind your own Affairs.

VICTORIA.

My friend's are mine. Pray, good my Lord,
What interest of my own have I to meddle?
'Tis neither vanity nor love of brawls,
I'm sure, that makes me busy. But is this
A time for tame implicit complaisance?
Can I sit still, and silently approve
When those I love are bent on desperate deeds?
Call me officious and impertinent,
As many meddlers as you chuse, I care not.
For be as angry as you please, at least
I will discharge my mind.

STRENI.

You're mad, you're mad.—
You're mad, I tell you.

VICTORIA.

'T may be.—But dear OLYMPIA,
Why will you hurry on a change, at best
So awful; here most certainly so fatal?

OLYMPIA.

It is my father's will,

VICTORIA.

VICTORIA.

Your father is

Too good to exact obedience here, against
Your inclination. 'Tis not very long since
He told you so.

STRENI.

Good God! what must I bear?

Is this exaction? Bless me! is it not
Her own free choice?—Pray, is it not, OLYMPIA?

OLYMPIA.

Alas! my father!—

STRENI.

What wouldst thou say?

OLYMPIA.

Forgive

My wavering mind. I want not to retract
My hasty promise. Only give me time,
A little time, till old impressions die;
That I may yield a more devoted heart,
A heart more worthy of a good man's vows.

STRENI.

Heaven's curse on all romance! You've learnt, OLYMPIA,
A delicacy foreign to this world.

You

You will, in spite of plain good sense, refine
 Yourself into a fool. How many matches,
 And happy matches too, had ne'er been made
 Were all your sex as scrupulous as you are.
 But you're so fickle, now you say this moment,
 And now next year.

OLYMPIA.

Alas ! it was my rashness.
 I hope my father will not urge against me
 What passion tortured from me.

STRENI.

Who can bear this?
 By Heaven I shall run mad !—To have a daughter
 So obstinate against her father's will !
 Against her own good fortune !—Gracious Heaven !
 Why did you curse me with a stubborn child ?
 I have but one, and she's ———

VICTORIA.

Dear good my Lord,
 Why all this heat ? OLYMPIA knows her duty ;
 And only begs a little time—

STRENI.

To shuffle.
 I'll have no more of that. I have too long

Indulg'd

78 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Indulg'd her squeamish humour : but I will not
Be longer trifled with in this, depend on't.
And if she is my daughter ; if I live,
This day shall make her, what she ought to wish,
Count CLAUDIO's wife : this very hour shall do it.
By Heaven it shall.

VICTORIA.

But why to-day, my Lord ?
Why should it be so sudden ?

STRENI.

'Tis my pleasure,
I'll have it so. Let me alone ; I know sure
What I am doing.

VICTORIA.

Yet hear me, good my Lord—

STRENI.

No more ! I would not have you waste your breath.
'Tis fix'd ; and may I never taste of bliss
If ought shall shake me.

VICTORIA.

O Heaven !—

OLYMPIA.

Cousin, forbear.—

Pardon it father to my perverse fate

That

'That I've e'er combated your sacred will.
'Tis but in this I e'er could hesitate
At one command of yours. You are determined ;
And were it to my ruin, I obey.
I've nothing more to plead.

STRENI.

My dearest child,
Not to thy ruin ; Heaven forbid ! I lead thee
To honour, happiness, establish'd bliss.
Thou soon shalt be the envy of thy sex,
And I the happiest father Heaven e'er smiled on.
Come ; let us go, and seize the prosperous hour ;
No dallying now, while fortune's in our power.

VICTORIA.

Alas ! alas ! what fortune I foresee
In this, is black, and ends in misery.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ALPHONSO.

Married ! Then what a wretch art thou, ALPHONSO ?
Just married !—Fates, I am your daily sport.
Born to be wretched, all my life has been
A train of strange mischances. Married ! and to
My most detested foe !—Death ! must this be ?
It shall not, were all hell in arms to guard
This imp of treachery. My quick revenge
Shall burst this fiend-tied most unnatural knot,
And make all villains quake—

A SERVANT.

My Lady, Sir,

The Countess will attend you.

ALPHONSO.

'Tis well. I thank you.—

The Countess ! Vengeance ! Oh I shall run mad !—
My fluttering heart ! She comes ! I caught a glimpse
That charms and tortures me.

SCENE

A TRAGEDY.

81

SCENE II.

ALPHONSO, OLYMPIA.

OLYMPIA.

Who's this? defend me!

What are you?

ALPHONSO.

Need I tell my name, OLYMPIA?

OLYMPIA.

I have no business with your name nor you.

What brought me hither?—

ALPHONSO.

Stay, OLYMPIA, hear me:—

OLYMPIA.

I'm not at leisure.—

ALPHONSO.

But, we part not so.

I will be heard.

OLYMPIA.

Presumptuous! are you mad?

Let go my hand.

VOL. II.

5

ALPHONSO.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

ALPHONSO.

'Twas mine—till fate and you—

OLYMPIA.

Yours!—Never!—"Twas not fate but I that gave it,
 And my heart with it, to a man ten times
 Your worth. It was my voluntary deed.
 I gave it to——

ALPHONSO.

A villain.

OLYMPIA.

Tell him so.

ALPHONSO.

I will; ne'er doubt it: what should hinder me?

OLYMPIA.

You will? I like your manners, to abuse
 My husband to my face.

ALPHONSO.

Your husband! plagues!

A knave that should be married to the wheel.—

And you to call him husband!

OLYMPIA.

I'm not used

T' exchange high speeches with the mad. Go, leave me,

And

And keep your head cool.—Good God! I cannot think—
What brought you here. How! leave your bride so soon!—
I've had a lucky miss.

ALPHONSO.

Alas, OLYMPIA!

How you mistake!

OLYMPIA.

In what?

ALPHONSO.

Both you and I
Are monstrously abused; the meekest dupes
That artful villainy and capricious fate
Ever combined to laugh at.

OLYMPIA.

How?

ALPHONSO.

Good God!

Can you imagine, were I so engaged
As you conceive, I should so far depart
From all propriety as this day to stun you
With impertinent complaints?

OLYMPIA.

O Heaven! what mean you?

© 2

ALPHONSO.

34 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

ALPHONSO.

While you remain thus ignorant of the truth,
My conscious honour so forfakes me, that
I deem myself the traitor you suppose me.
But know, OLYMPIA——

OLYMPIA.

What?

ALPHONSO.

There never was
A heart more true to tenderness than mine.
'Twas your's, 'tis your's; you reign unrivaled there;
You ever did, and ever shall: I scorn
All other vows.

OLYMPIA.

Bless me! you rave indeed.
This is strange talk for a new-married man!

ALPHONSO.

You will not understand me, dear OLYMPIA—
I am not married.

OLYMPIA.

Horrors! Did I hear you?—

Not married!

ALPHONSO.

A TRAGEDY.

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ALPHONSO.

No.

OLYMPIA,

Not married!

ALPHONSO.

No, OLYMPIA.

OLYMPIA.

Not married!—Oh such monstrous villainy!—
I'm dizzy—hold me—ah!—

ALPHONSO.

Alas! alas!

What shall I do? Dear dear OLYMPIA!—ah me!
I fear she's dead. A sad and mortal paleness
O'erspreads her lovely face—These hands are cold
And damp as clay—She does not breathe—O God,
She's gone for ever—Dead, dead, dead, OLYMPIA!
O horrible hour!—I follow thee,—yes, thou
Shalt be my angel to conduct my flight
From this base world.—She stirs—the deadly hue
Shifts from her cheek—she breathes—she sighs—
OLYMPIA!

OLYMPIA.

Where am I?—Ah—

G 3

ALPHONSO.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

ALPHONSO.

Lift these sweet eyes again,

OLYMPIA.

Alas, this is no dream! I am awake.

It is ALPHONSO!—will no shock destroy me?

Ah! when shall I be dead?

OLYMPIA.

Talk not of dying.—

OLYMPIA, when you do, this world to me

Becomes a waste: 'tis little better now.

OLYMPIA.

What blows of fate the wretched may survive!

The worst I had to fear is come upon me;

And yet I live!—But—

ALPHONSO.

Something in that look

Made beauty dreadful.

OLYMPIA.

Oh, my fatal rashness!

Alas, ALPHONSO!—yet what could I do?

Provoked by false intelligence—how false

Is yet a mystery: STURIO, an honest man,

Your friend, produced it. Was there room to doubt

Of

Of his integrity? your well-known hand
 Confirmed it. — God of Heaven! I must suppose
 Your friend corrupted, and that letter forged.
 What else? — I tore it hastily; yet still
 It was so perfectly your hand, O villainy!
 Ingenious villainy! 'twould have amazed you.

ALPHONSO.

Alas! this mystery is soon unravelled.
 Forgive th' intemperance of a frantic fit:
 'Twas mine, OLYMPIA.

OLYMPIA.

This is stranger still.
 Quite inconceivable!

ALPHONSO.

I'll tell you all:
 And when I've done judge if I was to blame.
 My father, as you know, when all his arts
 And interest fail'd to mitigate the King,
 Would needs himself accompany my exile.
 So much he stomached the disgrace, he swore
 The burning vault should swallow Naples ere
 He touched its shore again. Besides, he felt
 Too much his friend Lord STRENI's altering mind.
 He dwelt on that; it stung him keenly: me

It only mortified. He strove in vain
 To rouse me to resentment. Inwardly
 He burnt for some fair opportunity,
 That I might be the first to cancel vows
 Which STRENI seemed not forward to confirm,
 The opportunity he wished for came
 As fate had winged it. For I had not long
 Pin'd at Palermo, when a friendship grew
 Between my father and the Count CASERTA ;
 Who from some discontent had long before
 Retired from Naples thither, and still loved
 By sympathy whoever hated Naples.
 This noble Count, proud of his ancient blood,
 Had two young daughters. The eldest JULIA,
 Some time had lived confined for an attempt
 To steal a marriage with a youth whose family,
 Tho' not obscure, he thought no match for his,
 Now grown impatient of his jealous cares,
 It pleased him in my favour to let slip
 Some distant hints, which with a ranc'rous joy
 My father snatched ; he pressed me eagerly
 To seize th' occasion : as inflexibly
 I waved th' unwelcome offer. Till at last
 There went a rumour made my blood run cold,
 That my false rival's suit was daily prospering.

When

A- TRAGEDY.

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When I look back, 'twas his own crafty lie,
For I can trace it to his emissaries;
Tho', blinded then and giddy with despair
And jealousy, too easily I was wrought on
To give it credit. What confirmed it too
Was that to all my frequent letters, one
Reply had ne'er been made.

OLYMPIA,

Oh Heaven! — not one

Of all those letters ever came to cheer
My desolate mind. I guess'd the cause, it seems,
Too truly. — But proceed.

ALPHONSO,

Long urg'd and teiz'd

In vain, at last provoked I made my suit;
Which, from a coy reception, by degrees
Was kindly entertained: but still it made
A ling'ring progress, which I more rejoiced
Than grieved at. For, tho' JULIA was compleat
In all th' engaging ways that could be wished
In a companion; and, tho' scarce a beauty,
Had personal charms sufficient to surprize
A vacant breast; yet, ah OLYMPIA! mine
Still with vain efforts struggled to shake off

100

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Its first lov'd conqueror's sway ; and still I hoped :
 Till with such plausible consistent strokes
 Your marriage was reported, that self-flattery
 No longer could amuse me. By this our fathers,
 Tired with a dallied courtship, hurryingly
 Urged on the treaty, and the day was fix'd.
 'Twas now just not arrived, when late at night
 Your letter came. Never was mortal breast
 So tortured with conflicting powers ; with joy,
 With anxious hopes and fluttering fears, shame, honour.
 Not for all Sicily would I again
 Endure that restless night's perplexity.
 Tho' 'twas determined in my mind, howe'er
 The world might clamour, that all other interests,
 All other decencies and duties, should
 Yield to my first engagement. The morning came
 On which I had to deal with difficulties
 That no address, without some miracle,
 Seemed equal to encounter. When, behold—
 JULIA was fled !—Good God ! my lighten'd soul
 Grew mad with joy. —I took a hasty leave,
 And hied me hither.

OLYMPIA.

Ah ! you came, ALPHONSO,
 But just too late. But Heaven would have it so.—
 I'm doom'd to wretchedness !

ALPHONSO.

JOHNNY A TRAGEDY.

91

ALPHONSO.

Alas, OLYMPIA!

Think on my misery!

OLYMPIA.

We both are ruined
By those who loved us, and have been too busy
To make us happy.

ALPHONSO.

Is there no resource?
No means to burst thro' all these rotten ties,
The work of treachery? Sure there are, OLYMPIA!
Heaven does not hear involuntary vows,
Vows cunningly surprized, or made in anger.
Shall the heart's vows, the ties of mutual love,
Old plighted faith, and sympathy of souls,
Yield to a mere cold formal obligation?
It must not be. I claim the elder right:
You were by all consents devoted mine,
Before this selfish insincere profane
Intruder ever saw you. Dear OLYMPIA,
Let us oppose fair arts to impious fraud.
I have the means at hand to snatch you from
This fatal place, to where the purest vows
May soon before the holy shrine dispel
The forcery of those sacrilegious rites;

OLYMPIA

And

52 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

And to its lawful owner render back
Th' inviolated prize.

OLYMPIA.

Alas ! alas !

ALPHONSO, this is raving.

ALPHONSO.

Where's the difficulty ?

The night comes on to favour this exploit.
Let us not curse our timid hearts hereafter
Because for fear of little squalls we lost
The tide of fortune. — Ah pity me, OLYMPIA !
To live without you is despair and frenzy.
I will not live upon such terms.

OLYMPIA.

Alas !

What you propose is neither fit nor practicable.
We needs must part — yes, we must part for ever.
Farewell, ALPHONSO ? — Leave me to my fate ;
No matter what it be. Farewell, farewell —
And when you think of me drop a sad tear,
And say there was a maid that lov'd me more
Than her own life. My kindest wishes still
Attend you with a warmth no time can cool ;
And my last breath shall bless you. Again farewell.

ALPHONSO.

A TRAGEDY.

93

ALPHONSO.

We must not part.

OLYMPIA.

We must, we must. Farewell.—

I heard a foot ; it comes this way.—If e'er
You loved me, leave this place without delay.
Stay not a moment longer.—Ah ALPHONSO !—
Farewell for ever !—

ALPHONSO.

Stay, OLYMPIA : stay !—

She's gone ! O Heaven !

SCENE III.

ALPHONSO, CLAUDIO.

CLAUDIO.

Good God ! it is ALPHONSO !—

This is astonishing !—My dear dear friend,
This unexpected pleasure quite transports me.
Thrice welcome, dear ALPHONSO !

ALPHONSO.

Generous CLAUDIO,

I know it, and I thank your courtly words.

Would

94 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Would thoughts were visible, that it might appear
 With what sincerity we love each other.
 But compliments apart, pray are you not
 Ashamed to see me?

CLAUDIO.

Why, ALPHONSO?

ALPHONSO.

Nay,

I know how nobly some despise all shame.
 But are you not afraid to see the man
 Who feels his wrongs, and will no longer bear 'em?

CLAUDIO.

I never was afraid to meet my foe,
 Much less to see my friend. You have no cause
 I'm sure, ALPHONSO, not to be my friend.
 Were all the truth known it would soon appear
 How from my heart I am, and still have been,
 My generous brave ALPHONSO's. Hitherto
 Indeed my friendly aims have still been cross'd;
 And I have felt it more perhaps than you.
 Tho' now those rubs to me seem rather fortunate:
 For little steps, by which each ass can climb,
 Are rather checks to merit, and disgrace
 Generous ambition; which at one bold flight

Should

Should seize a station worthy of itself.
 And now the time draws near, when I shall prove
 By deeds with what sincerity I still
 Have lov'd ALPHONSO. Something that may suit
 Aspiring worth I purpose to resign;
 And but retain it till my interest has
 Secured it yours. Nay were you not my friend,
 Of all men living I should wish it yours:
 Because I love my country as I ought,
 And would be honoured in my successor.

ALPHONSO.

Fine words! enough to make a gull of one
 That did not know you. But they cost you nothing.—
 You talk of friendship! and to me, presumptuous!
 You never was a friend, nor ever can be:
 I know what spurious metal you are made of.
 I come not here to dangle or amuse
 The fool of hope with catching slippery promises.
 I scorn the paultry sport.—Yet there's one favour,
 The only one that I shall ever deign
 To ask or to receive of you.

CLAUDIO.

What's that?

ALPHONSO.

There is a fountain in the grove behind

96 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

The gardens, if you'll meet me there alone
 Within this half hour, 'twill oblige me.

CLAUDIO.

Ha! ha!

If one could guess why, this would seem a challenge.
 You're pleasant, dear ALPHONSO. Ha! ha! ha!

ALPHONSO.

You will not laugh it off so.

CLAUDIO.

If you're serious,

Why should I from the mere contagion of
 An angry look, or a few hasty words,
 Give up my calm mind to a giddy storm?
 Or be with impotent madness drawn into
 The eddy of my erring friend's conceits?
 If when my friend is drunk with causeless rage
 I lose my sober temper, I become
 The greater lunatic. Hear me, good ALPHONSO:
 I can and dare; but yet I should be sorry
 To use my sword without some solid cause.
 'T must be a solid cause indeed that spurs me
 To point it at the honest breast of one
 I've lov'd so truly. And, for all your anger,
 Believe me (for I know myself and you)

Which

Which of us ever falls, the other leads
 A life of horror and remorse no time
 Can ever cure. Then ere we fight at least
 Let us explain ourselves. 'Tis chiefly from
 Fantastic jealousies, childish fits of spleen,
 Mistakes on one side and false pride on th' other,
 That honest men e'er quarrel.—Pray, ALPHONSO,
 In what have I offended?

ALPHONSO.

Holy Heaven!

Who would not think this cheat a faint, an oracle?
 But there's no devil to a smooth-tongued villain.—
 In what have you offended?—Hark ye, tell me
 Who was it that procured my banishment?
 Who was it that embargoed sacred truth,
 To give free traffic to pernicious lies?
 And by the most perfidious arts contriv'd
 To step between me and my dearest right?—
 I see by your look you're innocent of the matter.
 Deny it if you dare, I'll force the lie
 Down that false throat.

CLAUDIO.

In one not given to wine;
 Such frolics must proceed from want of sleep.

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H

Calm

98 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Calm these wild spirits with one night's repose,
And then I'll talk with you.

ALPHONSO.

Buffoon, no shuffling !

One of us two shall sleep his last to-night. —
You'll meet me presently.

CLAUDIO.

Excuse me now,
I'm otherways engaged.

ALPHONSO.

You lie.

CLAUDIO.

Beware,
I must not hear this.

ALPHONSO.

You lie.

CLAUDIO.

Nay, then —

ALPHONSO.

A stab !

Well aimed to miss. Now have at your false heart.

SCENE IV.

ALPHONSO, CLAUDIO, STRENI,
and *Servants*.

STRENI.

[their swords.—
What's this? what's this? Good Heaven!—beat down
Hold, hold, I charge you.—Part them—Are you mad?—
Pray how began this fray? ALPHONSO, CLAUDIO,
You're both my friends, and I am shocked to see
Such hot-brained work between you. How began this?—
Go you and wait without—Pray who began this?
Come, CLAUDIO, tell me,—was it you?

CLAUDIO.

My Lord,
I ne'er began a quarrel.—Let me breathe first—
And then I'll tell you.—

ALPHONSO.

Nay, 'twas I; I own it.—
Who else had reason to complain? 'Twas I,
Provoked by monstrous injuries, who gave
Opprobrious truths a vent. But 'twas not I,
Who like a cut-throat, an insidious coward,

100. THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

Aimed at my unguarded enemy's heart. I'm sorry
It should have happened here. I did not mean
To scare the peace of this respected house
With angry deeds.

STRENI.

Young blood is hot, ALPHONSO.
When I was young like you my sword would ach
At every slight offence : where none was meant
I've been too madly brave. But when the fit
Was fairly fought out, it never failed to end
In warmest friendship. Trust me we have wept
With generous passion, at the sudden change
From bloody strife to cordial amity.
There is no joy to that which noble foes
At reconciliation feel. Come, come your hands ;
Yours CLAUDIO, yours ALPHONSO. Come, embrace :
Be friends for ever.

CLAUDIO.

I have ever been,
And still shall be ALPHONSO's.

ALPHONSO.

As sincerely
Shall I be CLAUDIO's. — But you'll meet me?

CLAUDIO,

A TRAGEDY.

101

CLAUDIO.

Yes.

ALPHONSO.

Directly.

CLAUDIO.

Doubt not.

ALPHONSO.

Till then—farewell.—Good night.

My Lord, I must away. If you have ought
To do at Naples, I'm your post ; for there
I must be ere I sleep.

STRENI.

Good night, ALPHONSO.

I'm sorry for this haste : next time we meet
I hope to taste your company at more leisure.

SCENE V.

STRENI, CLAUDIO.

STRENI.

How does my Count ? You are not hurt I hope ?

CLAUDIO.

Not hurt, my Lord, but truly much amazed.
I did not dream to meet ALPHONSO here ;
Still less that we should quarrel.

H 3

STRENI.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

STRENI.

'Tis no wonder.

CLAUDIO.

Not, that he should, before his wedding day
Could well be over, traverse land and sea
In search of quarrels ?

STRENI,

There's your mistake, my friend,—
That marriage came to nothing.

CLAUDIO.

Is it possible ?

STRENI.

'Tis true.

CLAUDIO.

Nay, then no wonder he should seek
To pierce my heart thro'. But how could this happen ?

STRENI.

I've learnt it but just now, 'Tis so. Within
I'll tell you how.

SCENE

SCENE VI.

CLAUDIO, *an Officer.*

OFFICER.

My Lord, my Lord, Lord CLAUDIO!

CLAUDIO.

Ha! who is this?—my watchful friend? what news?
There's horror in thy look.

OFFICER.

Fly, fly, my Lord.
This instant fly. They'll presently be here.
Your life is sold. Fly, fly.

CLAUDIO.

My life?

OFFICER.

Your kinsman
Has bought his own with yours.

CLAUDIO.

I thank him. Come;
Thy hand, I owe thee much; and if I live
Thou'rt made for ever.

H 4

OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Ah! my good Lord. But fly,
Lose not a moment. Could I but contrive
To misdirect their search.—I'll try,

CLAUDIO.

Farewell.

Success attend you.

SCENE VII.

CLAUDIO.

What a fool was I
Not to have laid this prating knave asleep,
This tell-tale coward, when I safely might?
But that's too late.—What's next?—I'll meet my foe.—
This challenge happens well. For if he drops,
I fly for that; no other crime supposed
To startle me. 'Tis something, plausibly
To shun the fire-edge of a nation's vengeance.
And to gain time gives art and fortune room
To work such happy wonders, that despair
Should never seize the wife.—But should I fall
By this impetuous boy.—Yet better so
Than give the curious mob a holiday
To see my head jump off.—But then he comes

A con-

A conqueror to possess my bridal bed ;
And meet with mutual ardour virgin charms
That fruitlessly were mine.—That's worse than death !
It must not be. Against a deadly foe
All arts are justified. Thou dy'st, ALPHONSO.
Prepare to meet a sterner bride. I come :
Please Heaven thou shalt not triumph in my doom.

ACT V. SCENE I.

STRENI, VICTORIA.

STRENI.

'Tis but a qualm, a fit o' th' spleen, that's all.
'Twill soon blow over.

VICTORIA.

Consider it not so slightly,
My Lord: she's dreadfully ill; so much unhinged
The down that hardly lights might turn the scale
And sink her past recovery. — O 'twas frightful
To see her agonies!

STRENI.

How was she taken?

VICTORIA.

With a countenance so changed I hardly knew her,
Sobbing and trembling, shockingly pale as from
A mortal wound, she burst into the room

And

And flounced upon the floor. I flew to raise her ;
 Let me lie still and die, she said : half raised
 Flat on her face she rush'd again, and lay
 Like one abandoned to despair. Astonish'd
 What this should mean, I learnt at last a tale
 Enough to make her mad indeed,—You know it.

STRENI.

It happened ill ; 'twas pity. But what next ?

VICTORIA.

After the sad recital, long she sat
 Pensive, and lost in thought : one might as well
 Have talk'd to a statue ; at last she started up
 And walk'd about and muttered frantically.
 Music, her favourite study and delight,
 I hoped might calm her ; but no sooner rushed
 The harmony on her ears than down she sunk
 Upon a couch, and wept immoderately.
 I thought my heart would have broke.—

STRENI.

My poor OLYMPIA !

VICTORIA.

I sent to stop the music. After a pause
 Of silent grief, a fit of laughing seized her,
 So violent, so unnatural as it seemed,

'Twas

108 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

'Twas perfectly shocking. It left her quite exhausted;
And now she sleeps.

STRENI.

She has had such fits before.

This kind repose will cure her. Poor OLYMPIA
Has ever been too sensible to grief,
To joy, to all impressions; the misfortune
Of delicate spirits, which shake at every gust
That blows or hot or cold. Do, my VICTORIA,
Go keep all quiet, and when she wakes send hither.
She'll soon be well.

VICTORIA.

Would I were sure of that!

STRENI.

O never doubt it.—Who's there?—How I'm beset
With teizing cares and fretful circumstances!

SCENE II.

STRENI, *a Servant.*

STRENI.

No news yet of the Count? not one returned yet
Of those that went to search?

SERVANT.

A TRAGEDY.

109

SERVANT.

Not one, my Lord.

STRENI.

You sent them different ways?

SERVANT.

My Lord, I did.

STRENI.

I doubt some misadventure. Go, LORENZO,
Speed me the news whate'er they be, and rid me
Of this suspense.

SCENE III.

STRENI.

There's mischief in the wind.

He slipt abruptly from me, after some
Ambiguous words, which then I did not mark.
They've surely met. That reconcilment was
A sham to blind me. I remember now
At shaking hands they whisper'd something.—Death!
I might have guess'd it. But who could have dreamt
He would have been so mad? What, in the name
Of all that's blundering, could provoke a man
Of courage so well proved, at such a time

To

110 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

To meet a foe whose challenge at any time
He might more to his dignity refuse?
Curse on his ill-tim'd valour!—I hope he's kill'd.
By heaven I care not! Such romantic fools
Should have no friends, and when they fall deserve
No pity.—Gods! will none come breathless in
To tell me he lies cold?—Here comes the tale.
Out with it—speak—the worst at once.

SCENE IV.

STRENI, *a Servant*.

SERVANT.

My Lord,

The gates are all beset with armed men.

STRENI.

Confusion! What is this? What armed men?
Is this young ruffian mad? From its firm base
He heaves this marble-pillar'd castle first,
And mounts it on the wind—He force these gates!
Were he an earthquake shot from hell he should not.—
What armed men?

SERVANT.

The servants of the state.

STRENI.

A TRAGEDY.

III

STRENI.

O God! God! God!

SERVANT.

 Their leading officer,
My Lord, desires an audience.

STRENI.

Send him hither.

SCENE V.

STRENI.

O monstrous! monstrous! O amazing villain!
I'm stupified to death. The world might rush
And I not feel it now.

SCENE VI.

STRENI, OFFICERS.

OFFICER.

My Lord, I come
On an unpleasing duty, to demand
On the state's part, one whom may justice find
Without a flaw, a guest of this fair roof—
Count CLAUDIO.

STRENI.

STRENI.

Sir, he was here, but is gone;
 And may all plagues go with him. Sir, he's vanished.
 He disappeared, as fiends do, suddenly.
 By this he shakes all hell with laughing at
 Our fruitless search.

OFFICER.

My Lord, you cannot mean
 To hide him from the state. Th' attempt were vain,
 Might turn suspicion into certainty.
 Where'er he be, if I may judge, my Lord,
 'Twere wise he should surrender.

STRENI.

Sir, this house [*Rings.*]
 Is open to you; find him if you can.
 These walls shall screen no traitor. If he's here
 I'm much deceived.

OFFICER.

I doubt not, good my Lord,
 Your well known honour. But the state's command
 Must punctually be followed; and I hope
 My Lord will pardon to our present office
 What rigid form exacts.

STRENI.

A TRAGEDY.

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STRENI.

You're welcome, Sir.

Who's there?—LORENZO, shew these Gentlemen
That if there lurks a traitor here, this house
Is sick till it disgorge him.

OFFICER.

After what
You have declared, my Lord, our search becomes
A fruitless office, a mere ceremony;
Which you'll excuse.

STRENI.

O Sir, most heartily.

SCENE VII.

STRENI.

O this infernal traitor! what could move him
T' abuse me thus!—He thought perhaps to screen
His frauds by my alliance. Subtle fool,
This unaccomplish'd treaty binds us not.
Or if it did; were he my daughter's husband,
And she a mother by him, he should find me
No patron of his crimes. Ah poor OLYMPIA!
How I have plagued myself and tortured thee,

VOL. II.

I

To

114 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

To match thee thus unworthily!—Death and hell!
 What madness, what curs'd dæmon, prompted me
 T' anticipate the day? Had I not been
 Bereft of judgment and all patience this
 Disgrace could ne'er have touched us.—O fool! O shame!
 To be this felon's tool! Yet who could dream
 He should be such a villain? How unshaken,
 He stood what conscious innocence might shrink at!
 But callous villainy feels no shame——

SCENE VIII.

STRENI, *a Servant.*

SERVANT.

My Lord,

I bring disastrous news.

STRENI.

Let those who ne'er
 Have felt misfortune start when sorrow's named.
 For me I grow so hardened to all shocks
 I might defy the fates. Then tell thy tale,
 Were it as mortal as the cannon's mouth
 Discharge it on mine ear.

SERVANT.

A TRAGEDY.

115

SERVANT.

My Lord,——ALPHONSO

Is kill'd.

STRENI.

Unfortunate youth!

SERVANT.

The Count is fled,
With fifty horsemen at his heels.

STRENI.

I grieve
For poor ALPHONSO.—Where found you him?

SERVANT.

In the Grove.
Shot thro' the breast; just dropt; his hand clinch'd on
His half-drawn sword.

STRENI.

O murderous villain!—Go,
Compose the body privately; and let
No whisper of this sad event steal out
T' alarm too tender ears.—

I 2

SCENE

ANT.

SCENE IX.

STRENI.

Ah poor OLYMPIA!

How shall thy tottering senses bear this shock?

Had I not fatally interposed thou mightst

Have been the happiest—

SCENE X.

STRENI, VICTORIA.

VICTORIA.

O my Lord! my Lord!—

STRENI.

What now, VICTORIA?

VICTORIA.

Poor OLYMPIA!—

STRENI.

What!

VICTORIA.

O mad! mad! mad! The poor dear creature's mad!

STRENI.

A TRAGEDY.

117

STRENI.

Just heaven forbid !

VICTORIA.

Alas ! it is too sure.—

Just now from a most unquiet sleep, that seem'd
Nature conflicting with despair, she started ;
Cried murder ! murder ! help ! ALPHONSO's murder'd !
Then with such wildness in her looks and action,
Such frantic vehemence of terror, grief,
And pity, she address'd th' invifible air ;
It chill'd us all with horror.—You'd have thought
ALPHONSO had been kill'd indeed, and that
His ghost flood there.

STRENI.

Amazement !

VICTORIA.

By and by

She flew to the window ; whence, her delicate frame
Is with convulfive violence fo possess'd,
'Twas all that three of us could do to hinder
A fatal leap.

STRENI.

Heaven guard my child !

[Going.]

I 3

OLYMPIA,

118 THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

OLYMPIA, *behind the Scenes,*

Away!

Away! I say. —

STRENI.

Hush!

OLYMPIA.

Hold me not, good fiends!

In God's name vanish! Fly, fly, fly!

WOMAN.

Dear Madam! —

SCENE XI.

STRENI, VICTORIA, OLYMPIA,

Women.

OLYMPIA.

Dear me no dear! I'll not be dear'd. Avaunt,
Ye wheedling witches! I know who taught you that.
Off, I conjure you — Go — Hah! what are these!

STRENI.

How does my dearest child!

OLYMPIA,

A TRAGEDY.

119

OLYMPIA.

 This looks so like
My father, and speaks so like him !

STRENI.

I am, I am.

Dost thou not know me ?

OLYMPIA.

 Are you not a ghost then ?
Mere visible nothing, as inessential
As the vain rainbow ? With reverence let me touch
Your hand. I shall know by that.—O 'tis, 'tis, 'tis
My real father, let me kiss for ever
This sacred hand. I'll never part with it more.—
But why d'ye look so sad ? There's something troubles you.

STRENI.

Alas, my child !—

OLYMPIA.

 O do not weep ; that's dreadful.
My heart is ready to break to see you thus :
And yet I cannot weep. Oh ! Oh !—Come, this way,
Let us go home.

I 4

STRENI.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

STRENI.

Thou'rt there already.

OLYMPIA.

O fye

That you should talk so!—D'ye see these creatures?

STRENI,

Yes,

Your faithful servants.

OLYMPIA.

Witches! witches! witches!

The mermaids of the burning sea!—Heaven snatch us
 From these enchanted walls!—Th' arch conjurer
 Will soon be here, and then all's lost.—

STRENI.

Who's that?

OLYMPIA.

His name is—I forget it, but you may guess.—
 Do not be angry. My head's confused a little:
 But I hope I said no harm. I named no body:
 Yet I'm afraid you're angry.—O blast me not
 With your heavy curses!

STRENI.

Heaven for ever bless

My dearest child!

OLYMPIA,

A TRAGEDY.

121

OLYMPIA.

Indeed you are too kind
To your poor unduteous daughter. Heaven and you
Forgive my crimes ! that I may die when I please.—
O curse on all mistakes !

STRENI.

What dost thou mean ?

OLYMPIA.

I'll tell you when the mists are gone. — I have it.
I chid ALPHONSO cruelly—Heaven forgive me !—
Indeed he was not such a fickle coxcomb
As some suppose.—They told me he was married ;
But I know other matters. — Oh ! oh ! oh !—

STRENI.

Kind Heaven restore her precious wits again,
And punish me with any other plague
But this !—

OLYMPIA.

D'ye know what I dreamt last night ?—Oh 'twas
A hideous fancy !—

STRENI.

Never mind dreams, my child,

OLYMPIA.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

OLYMPIA.

The Moon spoke to me ! 'Twas horrible. Yet that
Was a trifle to what happened afterwards. —

O this head ! this head ! —

I cannot put it into words ; but while

Such dreams are going who would dare to sleep ? —

I have not slept this month.

VICTORIA.

Come, dear OLYMPIA,

'Tis late, come go to bed. I'll watch by your side,

While sweet repose dissolves those idle fears.

Let us to bed.

OLYMPIA.

Away ! — Are you a witch too !

You league against me too ? — Cousin of vengeance,

Hark you, I'll never go to bed ; I'll die first. —

O fye, fye, fye ! to what would you betray me !

Go, go, vile shocking creature ! —

STRENI.

This to VICTORIA,

Your dearest friend, OLYMPIA ?

OLYMPIA.

Yes, my friend !

Such friends as Heaven defend me from ! — My friend,

To snatch the antidote of all sorcery from me?
The balm that heals all wounds.—Ah you're a trusty one;
Would I had known you sooner!

STRENI.

What means this?

VICTORIA.

Mere jealous fancies, sick imaginations,
Like all the rest.

OLYMPIA.

Hark ye:—Nay if you weep
I've done. I'm such a tender hearted fool.—
Ah VICTORIA, VICTORIA!—

VICTORIA.

Dear dear OLYMPIA!—

OLYMPIA.

Hush! What's that? Let me go.
He's coming.

VICTORIA.

Who, my dear!

OLYMPIA.

'Tis CLAUDIO.—Hide me!—

STRENI.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE,

STRENI.

He'll trouble thee no more. — He's gone.

OLYMPIA.

Ah! would

I had never seen him! that's my prayer, and if

There's any harm in it — O Heaven! — See there!

STRENI.

Bless thee! What's there?

OLYMPIA.

See! See!

STRENI.

See what, my child?

OLYMPIA,

D'ye-ask?

STRENI.

What should I see?

OLYMPIA,

A fight to break

A heart of rock, and make the lion whine

Like a whipt spaniel. — ALPHONSO pale and bloody!

O misery, misery! O most lamented youth!

Who did this cruel stern remorseless deed

No

No miracle can undo? — Dead, murder'd, butcher'd!
Speak, I conjure you. Dear dreadful vision, say
What ruffian shall be torn on the wheel for this?
Oh! 'tis not to be born to see you look so. —
Speak if thou canst — He's gone!

STRENI.

Alas! my child,
Thou speak'st to the winds.

OLYMPIA.

Good God! — VICTORIA! —

VICTORIA.

'Twas a mere fancy, for ALPHONSO lives;
And lives, I hope, for many happy days
With his OLYMPIA.

OLYMPIA.

Insupportable!
Must I be juggled out of my senses thus?
It seems I am a child, a fool. Wife cousin,
Pray do not laugh at me! do not, I say.
And yet it may be wit perhaps to jest
With torture and despair.

VICTORIA.

Can you suspect me
For such a monster?

OLYMPIA.

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OLYMPIA.

Did you not see him plainly?

VICTORIA.

Believe me, no.

OLYMPIA.

That's strange! that's strange, indeed!

STRENI.

How deadly pale,

She's grown!—Thou'rt sick, my child.

OLYMPIA.

Too well, too well!

Only a little chilliness wanders o'er me.—

Hark how my ears ring! Lend me your hand, VICTORIA.

VICTORIA.

Alas! thou shudder'st so thou canst not stand.

Cold sweats bedew thee; thou'rt ready to faint, dear girl,

Come, lean upon this couch. So.—

OLYMPIA.

As you will.

Do with me what you please.—Ha! there again!

Now if you do not see him you're blind.—Dear father

Behold! see there!—I come, I come, ALPHONSO!

Receive me Heaven—and you—

STRENI.

A TRAGEDY.

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STRENI.

Ah! hold her up!

She falls like one shot thro' the brain.

VICTORIA.

Alas!

She's dead! dead! dead!

STRENI.

'Tis but a fit I hope.—

Hold up her head.—Help, help! Oh all the world

To hear her speak again!—Ah me! that face

Is fix'd in death. She's cold, cold—poor OLYMPIA!

I've liv'd too long. She's gone, my faultless child

For ever gone—and I her murderer—Oh!



